



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 22, 2004

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SEN. GARY NODLER WANTS GOVERNOR'S OFFICE TO EXPLAIN WHY WASHINGTON, D.C. OFFICE HAS BEEN KEPT OPEN

At the close of his State of the State address on Wednesday, Gov. Bob Holden indicated he was reaching across party lines in order to “work together to move Missouri forward.” Less than three hours after the end of that speech, during a meeting of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I asked the governor’s Budget Director Linda Luebbering to explain why the executive branch has continued to operate a Washington, D.C. office despite a legislative directive to shut it down.

Where, I asked, does the governor get this kind of authority?

The budget director could not cite a single statute or place in the Constitution that allowed the governor to take these actions.

Blatantly ignoring an instruction from the General Assembly does not indicate to me that the governor is trying to work with lawmakers.

The Missouri Constitution gives the governor the power to withhold money, it does not give him the authority to spend money that has not been appropriated. Only the General Assembly can appropriate money.

When putting together the 2004 Fiscal Year budget, the General Assembly decided to close the state’s Washington office as a cost-saving measure. The office is used largely as a lobbying tool to promote Missouri interests.

I’ve always believed that we elected our U.S. Senators to serve as our voice in Washington, D.C. Sen. Bond and Sen. Talent have certainly proven that they are capable of fighting for Missouri’s best interests.

Funds normally used for the Washington, D.C. office were taken out of the Office of Administration's budget, and the Legislature made it clear to the governor that the office should be eliminated.

It takes more than \$100,000 to keep that office running. In these tough fiscal times that money could be used more effectively elsewhere.

Rather than close the office, the governor diverted funds from state departments for the purpose of maintaining a "presence" in Washington, D.C.

Even if the governor has the authority to divert money in this fashion – and I don't believe that he does – I certainly don't believe that these departments can afford to use funds to keep this office open. Last year during the budget process, these same departments told the Senate Appropriations Committee time after time that they had "already bled all they could afford to bleed" and could not afford to lose even one more dollar.

No governor can ignore the General Assembly's appropriations bills.

The governor of the State of Missouri does not have the authority to spend money not appropriated by the General Assembly.

I recommended to the chairman of the Appropriations Committee that a letter be sent to the Missouri Attorney General requesting an investigation into this matter.

By keeping that Washington office open, the governor has violated the Missouri Constitution.

I will keep you updated on this matter.

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